

Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Investment Strategies Committee

Draft Meeting Summary

FOR REVIEW AND ACTION

October 14, 1999

Present: Dale Stedman, Chair, Ted Bottiger, Don Briscoe, Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, Peter Hurley, Charles Mott, Patricia Otley

Absent: Bill Lampson, Vice Chair, Bettie Ingham, John Kelly, Representative Maryann Mitchell

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. He reviewed the minutes from the August 9 meeting and asked for any proposed revisions. The Committee approved the minutes from the previous meeting as presented.

Discussion and Adoption of Revised Findings

The Committee reviewed the new proposed safety findings and made revisions. Members agreed to revise the safety finding as follows:

Despite a 75% increase in vehicle miles traveled in the last twenty years within Washington, annual traffic fatalities have dropped by 23%. Annual traffic injuries have increased 26% in the last twenty years, but have grown at only one-third the rate of increase in vehicle miles traveled. While the risk of accidents while driving has fallen, the losses due to accidents remain substantial.

a. Traffic Fatalities - Washington currently experiences 1.32 traffic deaths per million miles traveled, compared to a national average of 1.6. Reductions in fatalities are principally the result of increased seat belt use and reduced drunken driving.

b. Traffic Injuries - Approximately 85,000 people were injured in automobile accidents in 1996, which generated economic losses due to injury, death, and damage of \$2.054 billion.

c. Structural Integrity of Roads and Bridges - In the event of an earthquake, highways and roads are not expected to experience significant seismic damage. However, many bridges are inadequately prepared for earthquakes due to incomplete seismic retrofit programs. Washington state has had a seismic retrofit program since 1991; remaining seismic repairs on state facilities are estimated to cost \$220 million. A state program is in place to complete the

retrofits by 2015. However, city and county bridges are not included in the state program, and city and county retrofit programs are generally underfunded.

d. Flooding - Flooding can compromise the structural integrity of roads and bridges. Funding limitations sometimes prevent transportation agencies from completing necessary flood preparations.

In addition to these changes, the Committee amended language on several of the full Commission findings, as follows.

- Finding 1.b. The last sentence was revised to read, “A larger workforce indicates that more people will be making the journey to work, adding to traffic, and increasing the demand for transportation solutions.”
- Finding 2. The second sentence was amended to read, “The state’s highway system has found it difficult to keep up with traffic growth and the demands placed upon it. Transit plays an important role in specific areas and times of day.” Part 2.a. was deleted.
- The title before finding 17 was amended to read, “Maintenance and Preservation of Transportation Facilities.”
- Finding 24. The Committee added “and major infrastructure investments will be required” to the end of the first sentence. The non-bold language was edited to read as follows: “Studies are now underway to determine the feasibility of breaching four dams on the lower Snake River in an effort to restore sockeye salmon habitat. Total state transportation cost impacts of the proposed drawdowns could total \$132 million to \$406 million.”
- Finding 27. The second sentence was rearranged to begin “For example, this is the case when....”
- Finding 30. Another point (d.) was added: “There is a need to integrate transit and trip reduction strategies into planning, funding, and implementation processes.”
- Finding 33. The third sentence was revised to read, “Zoning requirements in suburban areas may create barriers that limit development of more compact, pedestrian-oriented development.”
- Finding 34. The second sentence was amended to read, “An emerging movement known as ‘smart growth’ uses incentives to promote higher densities with a mix of land uses....”

The Committee also added two new findings, the first to the Congestion section and the second to the Land Use section of the full Commission findings. The new proposed findings read as follows:

1. **Park-and-ride lots encourage carpooling and transit use; many lots in congested corridors are currently full.** The success of park-and-ride lots depends on the frequency of transit service, the travel time and cost advantage to transit and carpool users, and the safety of the park-and-ride lot, including adequate lighting.

2. **Federal TEA-21 encourages considering land use alternatives when conducting corridor studies, but such analyses are currently rare.** WSDOT could incorporate land use alternatives as standard practice when conducting corridor studies.

Work Plan for Developing Committee Recommendations

Mike Doubleday of the Commission staff led the discussion of the preliminary work plan for developing Committee recommendations. The purpose of the discussion was to review the progress of the Committee and to reach consensus on the schedule and plans for the next six months. The Committee reviewed the document and revised the language of the proposed work plan (see attachment).

The Committee discussed the importance of having a definitive dollar figure that quantifies the transportation infrastructure needs of the state, counties, and cities. Some members felt that instead of using a specific number, the Committee should focus its efforts on recommending techniques to analyze projects. Others believed that a defensible number was necessary to build public confidence in the Commission. The Committee concluded that a range of numbers should be estimated, where the low end of the range approximates the cost of maintaining, preserving, and replacing the existing system, and the high end of the range approximates the cost of providing for congestion relief or improved mobility.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.